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ABSTRACT

These guidelines are intended to assist high school psychology teachers in safeguarding the rights and welfare of students and experimental subjects while promoting high-quality instruction. There are three sets of guidelines. The first set deals with the use of animals in school science behavior projects. The major goal of such projects should be educational, i.e., they should teach about research procedures and introduce students to ethical issues in animal care and research. These guidelines do not apply to supervised student work in research laboratories. The second set of guidelines deals with the use of human participants in research or demonstrations conducted by high school students. And, finally, ethical guidelines for high school psychology teachers are presented. Complex ethical issues may be involved in experiments with human participants, experiments with animal subjects, self-disclosure in class discussions or activities, and questioning of personal or social values. Most of this last set of guidelines has been adapted from the American Psychological Association and the National Education Association codes of ethics. (RM)

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Ethical Guidelines For The Teaching of Psychology In The Secondary School

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SP 016 568

American Psychological Association

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGY IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

These guidelines were developed by the American Psychological Association (APA) to assist high school psychology teachers in safeguarding the rights and welfare of students and experimental subjects while promoting high-quality instruction in psychology. The guidelines pertain to student experimentation and demonstration with animals, student experimentation and demonstration with humans, and ethical issues faced by the high school psychology teacher.

American Psychological Association

1983

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ANIMALS IN SCHOOL SCIENCE BEHAVIOR PROJECTS[1]

With today's emphasis on the advancement of science, more and more intermediate and secondary students are participating in classroom and science fair projects with live animals. Although new knowledge may result from classroom research, the guidelines that follow are predicated on the assumption that the main objective of using animals in such projects is educational. Such projects should not only teach research procedures but should also introduce students to ethical issues in animal care and animal research. Since the resources available in schools will rarely be comparable to those of an established research facility, these guidelines are more restrictive than those for research settings. They do not apply to supervised student work in research laboratories, which come under the provisions of the APA Principles for the Care and Use of Animals. [2]

1. In the selection of science behavior projects, students should be urged to select animals that are small and easy to maintain as subjects for research.

2. All projects must be pre-planned and conducted with humane considerations and respect for animal life. Projects intended for science fair exhibition must comply with these guidelines as well as with additional requirements of the sponsor.

3. Each student undertaking a school science project using animals must have a qualified supervisor. Such a supervisor shall be a person who has had training and experience in the proper care of the species and the research techniques to be used in the project. The supervisor must assume the primary responsibility for all conditions of the project, and must insure that the student is trained in the care and handling of the animals as well as in the methods to be used.

4. The student shall do relevant reading about previous work in the area. The student's specific purpose, plan of action, justification of the methodology, and anticipated outcome for the science project shall be submitted and approved by a qualified person. Teachers shall maintain these on file for future reference.

5. No student shall inflict pain, severe deprivation, or high stress levels, or use invasive procedures such as surgery, the administration of drugs, ionizing radiation, or toxic agents unless facilities are suitable both for the study and for the care and housing of the animals and unless the research is carried out under the extremely close and rigorous supervision of an experienced and qualified scientist trained in the specific area of study. Normally such research would take place in a qualified research facility. These projects must be conducted in accordance with the APA Principles for the Care and Use of Animals.

6. Students, teachers, and supervisors must be cognizant of current federal and state legislation and guidelines for specific care and handling of their animals (e.g., the Animal Welfare Act). Copies of humane laws are available from local or national humane organizations. A recommended reference is the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Stock Number 017-040-00427-3.

7. The basic daily needs of each animal shall be of prime concern. Students must insure the proper housing, food, water, exercise, cleanliness, and gentle handling of their animals. Special arrangements must be made for care during weekends, holidays, and vacations. Students must protect their animals from sources of disturbance or harm, including teasing by other students.

8. When the research project has been completed, the supervisor is responsible for proper disposition of the animals. If it is appropriate that the animal's life be terminated, it shall be rapid and painless. Under no circumstances should students be allowed to experiment with such procedures.

9. Teachers and students are encouraged to consult with the Committee on Animal Research and Experimentation of the American Psychological Association for advice on adherence to the guidelines. In cases where facilities for advanced research by qualified students are not available, the Committee on Animal Research and Experimentation will try to make suitable arrangements for the student.

10. A copy of these guidelines shall be posted conspicuously wherever animals are kept and projects carried out, including displays at science fairs.

11. Schools should establish a mechanism for external review of all projects involving animals. One mechanism would be to set up an animal studies committee. The committee should consist of scientists from both the high school and university level. Their expertise should include someone acquainted with scientific review procedures, a qualified research scientist, and a person experienced in animal care, such as a veterinarian or a comparative psychologist.

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH OR DEMONSTRATIONS CONDUCTED BY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS[3]

High school students planning to use human participants in research or demonstrations are strongly urged to become thoroughly acquainted with the American Psychological Association's Ethical

Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants.[4] The potential problems of such research may not be immediately evident to those doing research for the first time. Among specific guidelines for the use of human participants in research or demonstrations conducted by high school students are the following.

1. All research and demonstrations involving human participants should be properly supervised by a qualified school authority. The supervisor should assume the primary responsibility for all conditions of the experiment. The following requirements should be fulfilled:

a. The supervisor should be familiar with the relevant literature concerning previous work done in the student's chosen area. When possible, the student should also review and summarize appropriate reading material.

b. A written preliminary outline of the student's plan of study, to include a statement of possible outcomes of the project and a description of how the student plans to accomplish the objective of the study, should be submitted and be available for evaluation by relevant school authorities. Such an outline should include the general and specific purposes of the research or demonstration and a justification of the methods to be employed.

2. Participants should not be exposed to physical or mental risk. High school students should not undertake procedures involving human participants that are likely to harm the participants. Participants should not be subjected to any risks greater than the ordinary risks of daily life. To assure compliance with this guideline, high schools are encouraged to form student-faculty committees that examine all research or demonstration proposals from the point of view of the APA's Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants, to assure that risks do not exceed the ordinary risks of daily life. Such committees might be constituted at the classroom level, across classes, at the department level, or school-wide.

3. Agreement to participate should be obtained from all participants. The individual conducting the project should obtain each participant's agreement to participate, based on a full understanding of what that agreement implies. Obtaining agreement involves providing a full explanation of the research or demonstration procedures with special emphasis on aspects of the project likely to affect willingness to participate. All questions asked by any prospective participant should be answered directly, honestly, and completely. Participants who are too young or for other reasons cannot comprehend the project should be excluded, or proxy consent should be obtained from parents or guardians; this principle also applies to the siblings of the person conducting the project. A clear and fair agreement that clarifies the responsibilities of both should be honored by the person conducting the project. Such a formal agreement may not be necessary in some studies of public behavior, but in such studies it is especially crucial that participants' rights not be infringed.

4. Participants should have the right to refuse to participate. Potential research participants have the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw from participation, for cause, at any time during the course of the research or demonstration procedures. The person conducting the project should explain this right to all potential participants prior to the commencement of the research or demonstration procedures. The person conducting the project should also provide opportunity for withdrawal with minimum discomfort during participation, particularly if a group activity is involved.

Protection of this right requires special vigilance when the individual conducting the project is in a position of influence over the participant. For example, students in lower grades than the person conducting the project should not be pressured into participating and should not be

publicly identified if they decline to participate in a particular experiment, survey, or demonstration. Under no circumstances should potential participants be exposed to ridicule, force, or excessive group pressure.

5. The student should deal with possible undesirable consequences for participants. The supervisor should discuss with the student possible undesirable consequences of the project that should result in at least a temporary halt in the project. In the event that unanticipated undesirable consequences are detected by the individual conducting the project, he or she should halt the project if it is still in progress and notify the supervisor or other appropriate school authorities.

6. The anonymity of the information gathered should be preserved. In certain projects, a participant may not wish the person conducting the project to disclose the results of the study in a way that individually identifies that participant. Only with the participant's full agreement can the person conducting the project disclose identifiable information about that participant to any other individual. A plan for protecting the anonymity of the information gathered should be a part of the procedure for obtaining initial agreement to participate. The person conducting the project should make every effort to maintain anonymity, but participants should be made aware that in some cases it may be difficult or impossible to maintain full anonymity about all of the information obtained. Formal agreement to participate may not be necessary in some studies of public behavior, but preservation of anonymity is as important in the observation of public behavior as it is in other research or demonstrations. In public situations, information should not be collected in such a way that individuals are identifiable.

It is suggested that persons conducting projects encourage potential participants to read

these guidelines. To ensure a careful reading and adequate understanding of these guidelines, persons conducting projects may wish participants to sign a statement such as that below.

> I have read the Guidelines for the Use of Human Participants in Research or Demonstrations Conducted by High School Students. I have received satisfactory answers to my questions concerning this research or demonstration. I understand that every effort will be made to protect the anonymity of my responses although it cannot be guaranteed. I understand that I may withdraw from this research or demonstration without penalty at any time.
>
> _____
> Name
>
> _____
> Signature
>
> _____
> Date

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR HIGH SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY TEACHERS[5]

It is generally recognized that teaching psychology in the high school is a challenging task, and that experiments, demonstrations, discussions, and other activities can be a valuable part of a psychology course. Complex ethical issues may be involved in experiments with human participants, experiments with animal subjects, self-disclosure in class discussions or activities, and questioning of personal or social values. This document presents some guidelines for high school psychology teachers. Most of the guidelines are adapted from the American Psychological Association and National Education Association codes of ethics.

1. Moral, ethical, and legal standards of behavior for any psychology teacher are a personal matter to the same degree as they are for any other citizen, except as these may compromise the fulfillment of their professional responsibilities, or reduce the trust in teaching of psychology held by the general public. In addition, teachers can influence others, and therefore, also should be aware of the possible impact of the public and ethical behavior that they exhibit in the presence of those whom they influence.

2. To the extent that high school psychology teachers have not had the training and experience of professional psychologists specializing in psychological testing, diagnosis, therapy, or research, they should avoid representing themselves to students, parents, or colleagues as experts in these areas. The ethics of teaching psychology require high school teachers constantly to strive for objectivity, to search for truth, and to distinguish between scientific principles and generalizations on the one hand, and personal opinions on the other.

3. High school psychology teachers have simultaneous obligations to five constituencies: their students, the parents, the school, the community, and the discipline of psychology. Although high school teachers of psychology should respond appropriately to these five constituencies, they must, nevertheless, always keep the best interest of their students in mind. For that reason, high school psychology teachers should not force students to act against their wills, except as necessary to meet curriculum requirements or to implement effective classroom learning.

4. In planning a course, high school psychology teachers should evaluate the ethical acceptability of all aspects of the course, taking these guidelines into account. If the appraisal suggests a deviation from any guideline, teachers

should seek ethical advice from an expert or an experienced colleague.

5. High school psychology teachers are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of acceptable ethical practice in a course. They are also responsible for the ethical behavior of co-teachers, student teachers, aides, and students involved in the course. These others, however, incur parallel ethical obligations. Department heads, principals, other administrators, school boards, and parents are also responsible for ethical practices in schools.

6. A significant part of a high school psychology course is consideration of the ethical aspects of human and animal experimentation. High school psychology teachers should raise questions about the ethics of research and treatment methods, applications of research results, and research or demonstrations performed by or on students. It should be made clear that many ethical questions have no simple answers and that thoughtful, well-formed, and well-intentioned individuals often reach different conclusions on ethical issues. Students should be encouraged to exercise ethical judgment and take stands on the ethics of actions that involve them; teachers should respect these stands, especially when the opinions differ from their own.

7. The study of psychology includes value-laden areas of human behavior. At the beginning of a course and throughout it, high school psychology teachers should emphasize that viewpoints on sensitive topics will be presented in addition to those that individual students already hold. Indeed, teachers have a responsibility to help students distinguish among facts, fancies, and values. Teachers should not avoid controversial issues simply because students hold opinions contrary to well-accepted scientific generalizations.

8. High school psychology teachers should protect students from undue psychological discomfort, harm, and danger in a course; students should not be subjected to any risks greater than the ordinary risks of daily life. Procedures that involve a significant possibility of harm to human participants should not be used. (This prohibition, however, is not intended to exclude the use of potentially effective laboratory tools such as mild electric shock from a demonstrably safe source). Experiments, discussions, demonstrations, and activities involving personally sensitive topics such as drug use or sexuality may produce undesirable effects. The high school psychology teacher should be aware of the diverse backgrounds of the students, and, when dealing with sensitive topics, treat the material objectively and present it in a manner that takes feelings into account. Teachers should explore alternative possibilities of reaching their intended educational objective and should seek advice on the ethical acceptability of any questionable activities. Students should not be permitted to employ procedures with human participants in areas in which their high school psychology teacher is not adequately trained to offer appropriate supervision. High school teachers of psychology are encouraged to seek the advice and supervision of a qualified scientist in these instances. In all cases, high school psychology teachers should be guided by APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists[6] and Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants.

9. It is, of course, important that the quality of relationships between students and the significant persons and social systems in their lives (e.g., family, school, church, and community) not be placed unduly and unnecessarily at risk. High school psychology teachers should not disclose information or use experiments, demonstrations, discussions, or other activities that involve significant risk to those relationships, without

very careful evaluation. For example, relationships could be damaged by the use of deception, including inaccurate or incomplete disclosure of information. On the other hand, even though a unit on the psychology of prejudice might create family problems for a child with a racially bigoted parent, the topic should not be avoided on such grounds alone.

10. Before undertaking an experiment, demonstration, discussion, or other activity, high school psychology teachers should attempt to anticipate undesirable consequences and take precautions to prevent them. In the event that an activity results in unanticipated undesirable consequences for a student or other participant, teachers should be sensitive to and make efforts to correct these consequences, including long-term after-effects, where relevant. When the needs of a student require it, teachers should refer the student to an appropriate professional such as the school psychologist or guidance counselor.

11. Certain events should lead to the discontinuation of an experiment, demonstration, discussion, or other activity. If high school psychology teachers become aware that undue physical or psychological discomfort, harm, or danger to a participant is occurring, or if a participant feels harmed by an activity or challenges its ethical acceptability, teachers should halt the activity immediately and take steps to relieve any harm or to correct any misunderstanding that has occurred. The activity should be resumed or repeated only if there is good reason to believe that the conditions that resulted in the earlier problem no longer exist. Teachers are urged to seek advice from the participants, as well as from colleagues or experts, before resuming or repeating the activity.

12. Students should be free to decline to participate, or to discontinue participation in an experiment, demonstration, discussion, or other activity that might involve undue and severe risk

to them. Providing alternative means of fulfilling course requirements is one way of satisfying this guideline. Where possible, students who decline to participate in an activity should not be publicly identified, nor should they be exposed to group pressure or ridicule.

13. Allowing students meaningful freedom to decline to participate in an experiment, demonstration, discussion or other activity implies that high school psychology teachers have informed students of the features of the activity that might reasonably be expected to influence their decision to participate. It also implies that teachers have answered any questions students may have about the activity. Considerations of class time or educational impact may sometimes prompt teachers not to inform students fully about an activity in advance; if the planned activity is new (without a history of success and safety in similar situations), teachers should seek advice on its ethical acceptability from colleagues and/or students.

14. At the end of a class session involving an experiment or demonstration using student participants, high school psychology teachers should provide the participants (and any observers) with a debriefing that includes a discussion of students' reactions to the activity. A debriefing that fully clarifies the nature of the activity should take place at the end of each experiment or demonstration.

15. High school psychology teachers cannot promise legal confidentiality to students, nor can students promise it to one another. Before an experiment, demonstration, discussion, or other activity, potential participants should be informed whether information that is obtained about or disclosed by them will be anonymous. Information that cannot or will not be anonymous should be kept private to the extent consistent with student learning. Circumstances under which such

information might be disclosed to others, especially persons outside the psychology class, should be the subject of a clear agreement arrived at in advance by the students and the teacher.

16. In situations where there might be a conflict between a high school psychology teacher's personal interests and the students' interests -- for example, when a teacher is conducting research for outside credit or publication and using the students as subjects -- teachers are under special obligation to seek advice on the ethical acceptability of planned activities.

17. In student experiments or demonstrations using animals as subjects, high school psychology teachers should, as a minimum, ensure that students follow APA's Guidelines for the Use of Animals in School Science Behavior Projects. In general, animals used in school experiments or demonstrations should be invertebrates rather than vertebrates, and naturalistic observation of vertebrates is preferable to experimentation on them. Invasive procedures, electric shock, and high stress should be avoided except under those unusual circumstances where a student of extraordinary promise has obtained competent, documented, and sustained supervision. In such cases, the student's experiment or demonstration should conform to APA's Principles for the Care and Use of Animals.

18. In student experiments or demonstrations using human participants, high school psychology teachers should ensure that students follow APA's Guidelines for the Use of Human Participants in Research or Demonstrations Conducted by High School Students. In general, students should obtain agreement to participate from all participants, deal with possible undesirable consequences for participants, and preserve the anonymity of the information gathered. They should not use procedures that expose participants to undue physical or psychological risk. Further, the statements in Guideline #8 on experiments or

demonstrations conducted by teachers also apply to experiments or demonstrations conducted by students.

Footnotes

[1]These guidelines were approved by the Committee on Animal Research and Experimentation, the Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools, the Board of Scientific Affairs, the Education and Training Board, the Board of Directors, and the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association. Members of the Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools when these guidelines were developed were Kathleen White (Chair), Loretta Bailey, Sam Cameron, Len Sheldahl, and Judith Goggin.

[2]A free copy of Principles for Care and Use of Animals is available from the Office of Scientific Affairs, American Psychological Association, 1200 Seventeenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

[3]These guidelines were approved by the Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools, the Education and Training Board, the Board of Scientific Affairs, the Board of Directors, and the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association. They are a condensed version of the APA's official guidelines for the use of human participants in research and represent a distillation of the customary procedures of responsible, experienced research psychologists. Adherence to these principles will provide protection not only to the participants in research or demonstration projects conducted by high school students, but also to the individuals undertaking or responsible for such research or demonstrations, both students and teachers. Members of the Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools when these Guidelines were developed were John K. Bare (ex-officio), Evelyn Frye, Frank B. W. Hawkinshire, Mary Margaret Moffett, Maxine Warnath,

and Michael Wertheimer (Chair). The Committee thanks F. Barbara Orlans for pointing out the need for these guidelines and for drafting five of the basic principles that appear in these guidelines.

[4]Copies of Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants are available for $8.50 each from the Order Department, American Psychological Associaton, 1200 Seventeenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

[5]These guidelines were approved by the Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools, the Education and Training Board, the Board of Directors, and the Council of Representatives of the American Psychological Association. Members of the Committee on Psychology in the Secondary Schools when these Guidelines were developed were John K. Bare (ex-officio), Evelyn Frye, Frank B. W. Hawkinshire, Linda Meador, Mary Margaret Moffett, Paul Munsford, Maxine Warnath, and Michael Werthemier (Chair).

[6]A free copy of the Ethical Principles of Psychologists is available from the American Psychological Association, 1200 Seventeenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.